

Comedy show to 'give death a voice' coming to a Gungahlin crematorium

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Estella Hutchinson is aiming to make you laugh while thinking about the Grim Reaper to show death doesn't have to be scary. Photo: Supplied.

Comedy and death are strange bedfellows, but one woman is bringing them together.

For Estella Hutchinson, an end-of-life doula and comedian, finding the humour in a serious topic is key to making it less scary.

"We spend so much time avoiding death, but it's definitely the one thing we can't avoid," she said.

"We think we can live forever – so we don't talk about it."

As an end-of-life doula, Ms Hutchinson sits down with individuals and families to plan for someone's passing or to help those they know.

"You've got the practical side, and then you've got the emotional and supportive," she said.

"I'm able to support families very early on, just in general end-of-life planning. That's when there's no diagnosis in place, but they want to make sure that they've got the right end-of-life documents and that sort of thing.

"I also work with people who have a new diagnosis – maybe they've got many years still to live – but they want to get that sort of thing tied away.

"It goes through to supporting families if someone wants to do at home versus being in hospital, and after-death care for their person."

Organising a show (one set in a crematorium) is set to bring her work to a new audience. But there's a twist.

"Quite often, people will open up into these conversations [around death] when there's a bit of comedy around," she said.

"It actually makes it easier to learn, as well, and to retain information.

"I've got quite a sense of humour, so I inject a bit of humour into conversations with clients, families and staff. I started thinking about how it could go together really quite well."

In an August show, Ms Hutchinson (who is also an occasional comedian under the name Stell Muses) will be joined by Canberra comedians Jacquelyn Richards and Sarah Stewart.

"Between the three of us, the different sets take you from pre-planning all the way through to [how to cope when] there's been a sudden death and experiences of choosing coffins. It certainly has a lot about the grief experience," she said.

"This is about giving death a voice because we don't talk about it.

"It's a soft way of bringing it up because throughout these conversations in the past, it has sparked other conversations and got people thinking about what they would want – or wouldn't want, which is equally as important."

The show – and her work – is done to help people think about death in a nuanced way rather than being terrified at the thought of it.

"One hundred years ago, you've been in a multi-generational home where grandma would be dying in the backroom," Ms Hutchinson said.

"Everyone would be a part of that – supporting her and looking after her. Now we just send them off to the hospital and funeral homes."

But if the thought of death is scary, Ms Hutchinson said having a conversation could be easier than assumed.

“People need to have these conversations, and it’s easier to have them today while you’re perfectly healthy,” she said.

“The last thing you want to be doing is trying to work out those details when you don’t expect to. If you think about it ahead of time, it just gives you time to get on with life.”

The Comedy at the Crem show will be held on 10 August from 1:30 pm to 3 pm at the Gungahlin Crematorium, located at 80 Sandford Street in Mitchell.

In-person tickets cost \$49.45 while live-streaming tickets cost \$34.45 and are [available via Trybooking](#).